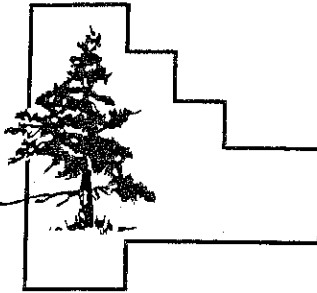


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M-18



FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF WILL COUNTY

22606 S. CHERRY HILL ROAD
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JOLIET, ILLINOIS 60434-1069
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August 31, 2001

Marta Witt, Public Affairs Officer
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Re: Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
Land and Resource Management Plan
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Ms. Witt:

The Forest Preserve District of Will County (District) is pleased to have the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Land and Resource Management Plan for Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (MNTP). The District appreciates and supports MNTP's use of logical planning methods and best management practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of functional natural communities as well as rare and threatened species within the site.

The District supports the preferred Alternative 4. This alternative provides for the widest diversity of restoration, recreation, and visitor services at an intensity level that seems appropriate for the scale of the site while still protecting sensitive environmental features.

The restoration proposal in Alternative 4 is very ambitious and balances the creation of natural communities dominated by native species (10,120 acres) with the creation of grassland habitats (6,720 acres) configured and targeted to meet the specific needs of the rare and area sensitive bird species inhabiting the site. The close proximity of a large metropolitan area creates a significant opportunity to interact with the public on environmental issues, almost necessitating a Visitors/Environmental Learning Center. The District hopes the interpretive and educational programming will incorporate the entire Prairie Parklands region. The District is also pleased to see a shuttle service proposed rather than an auto loop tour, as this will reduce congestion, reduce consumption of fossil fuels, and promote air quality issues.

Alternative 4 proposes a trail system having multi- and single-use trails, as well as a connection to the District's Wauponsee Glacial Trail (WGT). Figure 8 shows public parking at South Arsenal and Hoff Roads, but a direct trail linkage is only shown for South Arsenal Road. Given the close proximity of the proposed public parking area to WGT at Hoff Road, the District recommends a direct trail linkage here as well. The WGT will be a multi-use trail that allows bicyclists, horseback riders and walkers. The additional trails, facilities, and scenic landscapes within MNTP will be beneficial and an added incentive to use the trail systems. The District will continue to work closely with MNTP on the planning and design of trail connections between WGT and MNTP.

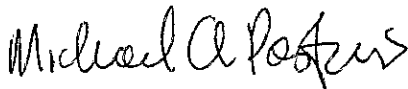
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The District also plans to provide limited camping at the north and south access areas (Laraway Road and Ballou Road, respectively) of the WGT. We anticipate close coordination between our two agencies in designing complimentary programs to meet the camping needs of the public and various trail users.

Hunting has been an ongoing practice at MNTP and is proposed to continue. We believe hunting will be an important management tool for maintaining deer density below the threshold of species or habitat impacts. The District has concerns about potential conflicts between hunting and site visitors. The plan does not elaborate if MNTP would be closed during shotgun season, or what other actions would be taken to insure visitor safety, as well as the safety of users on adjacent public land, specifically WGT. The District wishes to coordinate with MNTP as these details are being worked out.

Thank you for your time and continued partnership with the District. If there are any questions or concerns regarding the District's comments, please contact Ms. Marcella DeMauro, Superintendent of Planning & Development at (815) 927-1018.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Pasteris
Executive Director

cc: District File
Operations Committee

G:\marcy\midewin dels comments

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ARGONNE NATIONAL LABORATORY

9700 SOUTH CASS AVENUE, ARGONNE, ILLINOIS 60439

WEB SITE: www.anl.gov

M-19

TELEPHONE: 630/252-3804

FAX NUMBER: 630/252-3847

August 21, 2001

Mr. Frank Koenig
Prairie Supervisor
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 South State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Dear Mr. Koenig:

I provided a comment letter during scoping for the Environmental Impact Statement for the Development of the Land and Resource Management Plan in which Argonne requested that the scope of the EIS address the protection and management of a portion of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie as a unique land area for conducting long-term research in land management, ecosystem dynamics, biodiversity, and restoration sciences.

We believe that because of its large size and natural features, Midewin provides a unique opportunity for outstanding research institutions in the region to apply modern experimental approaches in ecological research that require land areas larger than 1,000 hectares. The DEIS failed to analyze the impacts of alternative configurations for setting aside a portion of the land area for such research activities. The impact analysis should also have considered specific issues of ecological scale (how much land is needed to conduct meaningful studies), support facilities, access, restricted public access, and appropriate research activities. A component of the impact analysis should have addressed the educational benefits and opportunities of a research program that includes graduate-student-directed research and study.

In this regard, I feel that you are remiss in meeting one of the four basic purposes for establishing the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, i.e., "to provide opportunities for scientific, environmental, and land use education and research." Appendix E of the LRMP discusses research needs and the goals and objectives of research at Midewin. However, it appears to be limited to research that will be conducted by the Forest Service and/or the Illinois DOC. There is no mention of the opportunity or the process by which researchers from the outstanding research institutions in the region can gain access to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The involvement of researchers from the region should be supported and even solicited. Such is not the case in either the LRMP or the DEIS. The Plan specifically states that there is no need to allocate lands to research.

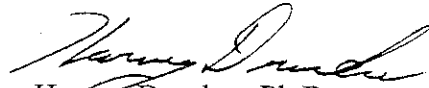
In view of the purposes for the establishment of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, I respectfully request that due consideration be given to researchers from the outstanding research

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institutions in the region and that these considerations be documented in the LRMP and the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Thank you for allowing me the chance to comment on the DEIS.

Sincerely yours,



Harvey Drucker, Ph.D.
Associate Laboratory Director
Energy and Environmental
Science and Technology

HD/AD:lmg

cc: A.J. Dvorak

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northeastern illinois planning commission

222 S. Riverside Plaza • Suite 1800 • Chicago, IL 60606 • (312) 454-0400 • Fax (312) 454-0411 • <http://www.nipc.cog.il.us>

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Gerald Sullivan

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Wallace D. VanBuren

July 27, 2001

Mr. Frank Koenig
Prairie Supervisor
United States Department of Agriculture
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 South State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Subject: Review Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Prairie Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Dear Mr. Koenig:

At its meeting on July 26, 2001, the Planning Committee of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Prairie Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The comments below were approved by the Planning Committee for transmittal to you.

- In general, we find your Plan and DEIS to be highly consistent with NIPC's adopted regional plans and policies, especially the *Biodiversity Recovery Plan*. As NIPC and the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie are members of Chicago Wilderness, we believe that your plan will greatly advance biodiversity restoration in this region. Congratulations on helping to bring these tremendous resources to northeastern Illinois.
- We are very pleased that you have referenced the *Biodiversity Recovery Plan* in your Plan. The *Biodiversity Recovery Plan* cites Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie as an example of a site that, once restored, is of sufficient size to support viable animal populations.
- While the Plan presents a good mix of trail opportunities, the Plan should reference the *Regional Greenways Plan*, which includes the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie as a component. The Wauponsee Trail is referenced, but there should also be mention of other stream greenways. Your Plan should strive to coordinate, or "match-up" with the adjoining greenway proposals in the *Regional Greenways Plan*.

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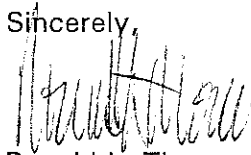
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- The Plan was prepared in accordance to national standards and guidelines, however local standards and guidelines should also be consulted. NIPC has prepared several model ordinances for northeastern Illinois, and the Plan should also refer to these standards and guidelines. For example, NIPC has model ordinances for floodplains, stormwater drainage and detention, soil erosion and sediment control, stream and wetland protection, and watershed management.
- Although transportation corridors are illustrated (Figure 6), the Plan should include a discussion of transportation context for the Midewin facility and, in particular, accessibility to the site. In particular, we believe you should address both short and long range ideas for public transportation access to the site. While it is recognized that you are not responsible for such accessibility options, you should include at least a reference to discussions that you have held with public transportation providers. Short term access might be provided by scheduled bus service. Long range considerations might include extension of the Metra Southwest Service to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.
- Although the adjacent lands are privately owned and under the jurisdiction of other governmental bodies, land use plans for adjoining areas and the NIPC Land Use Inventory should be consulted for neighboring land uses which might explore possible buffer areas around Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. In addition, there should be a process for working with local officials regarding adjacent land uses.
- We find Alternative 4, the Preferred Alternative, to be a good choice. It offers a balance of restoration for both flora and fauna, and it offers a variety of recreational opportunities for visitors to the site, with respect to the more sensitive species.

Thank you for this opportunity to review these documents for this important and exciting development in Will County.

Sincerely,



Ronald L. Thomas
Executive Director

Cc: John Rogner, Chair, Steering Committee, Chicago Region Biodiversity Council



ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

1021 NORTH GRAND AVENUE EAST, P.O. BOX 19276, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62794-9276

August 28, 2001

Marta Witt, Public Affairs Officer
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

SUBJECT: May 2001 Proposed Land & Resource Management Plan
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Dear Ms. Witt:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject proposed prairie plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.

My comments are attached to this cover letter.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at (312) 814-1059.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles T. Grigalauski".

Charles T. Grigalauski
Senior Public Service Administrator
Bureau of Land

attachment

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August 28, 2001 comments of Charles T. Grigalauski, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency – Bureau of Land on the May 2001 Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Proposed Land & Resource Management Plan

1. I agree with the U.S. Forest Service that Alternative 4, in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, should be the preferred alternative. Alternative 4 establishes a reasonable balance of uses at the Midewin consistent with the purposes of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie set forth in the *Illinois Land Conservation Act of 1995*.
2. The Plan does not address how potable water will be supplied to future administrative sites, picnic areas, or campgrounds. Please note that Section 9.2.1.2 of the October 1998 Superfund Record of Decision (ROD) for the Joliet Army Ammunition Plant sets forth a requirement that groundwater above the Maquoketa shale not be used for potable water supply. This requirement applies to the Midewin. The U.S. Forest Service may consider using the Elwood or Wilmington public water supplies to provide potable water where it will be needed. Another alternative is to construct water supply wells, which are finished below the Maquoketa shale. Any new water supply wells should not be drilled within or near Groundwater Management Zones, which are delineated on Figure 4 Groundwater Operable Unit Summary of Remedial Activities in the October 1998 Superfund ROD.
3. Public access to areas known or suspected to contain unexploded ordnance (UXO) should be strictly prohibited now and in the future until such time that the Army successfully removes the UXO or otherwise eliminates the risk of UXO to humans. An example of this is on Figure 6 of the Plan where a Multi-use Trail crosses the L3 Demolition Area. L3 is known to contain UXO.
4. The legend on Figure 6 of the Plan should be corrected so as to clearly differentiate between areas appearing as Municipality versus Army lands.